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With bass that is large and in charge — Definitive Technology's new SuperCube I is a well dressed new player in the tiny subwoofer market.

Definitive Technology SuperCube™ I Subwoofer

audiorevolution.com's
Best of 2002
Subwoofer-of-the-Year

"The Definitive Technology SuperCube I is the best subwoofer that I have auditioned in its class … At $1200 this sub is a bargain."

Definitive Technology's SuperCube I

By Bryan Southard, October 2002

Introduction

Several design philosophies differentiate today's better subwoofers from one another, yet they share a very common attribute: they are designed to shake the fillings from your teeth. A high-performing subwoofer can supply the necessary energy to make the common onscreen outbreak at a local dinosaur park feel as if T-Rex has unmistakably made his way to your home. Subwoofers can range in size from monstrosities that resemble your refrigerator to products only slightly larger than a soccer ball.

"provided the best sub integration I have heard in my system"

The SuperCube I is the most recent subwoofer offering from Definitive Technology. The SuperCube I is an ultra-compact powered cube that measures just a hair over 14 inches in any direction and is driven by a mighty 1,500-watt amplifier. Although small in stature, the SuperCube I weighs a dense 60 lbs. and has a retail price of $1,200.

From a distance, the SuperCube I looks like many cube-style subwoofers. However, close examination reveals a couple of touches that make it distinctively more attractive. The most popular of the cube subwoofers uses a semi-gloss paint over the exterior surfaces. The SuperCube has attractive black fabric stretched over the entire cube, accented with a top plate, painted to perfection in piano black. This look is in line with the rest of Definitive's speaker line. With the combination of its diminutive size and modern styling, this sub should fit in with virtually every modern décor.

"rock solid bass … the reproduced low frequencies were tight and extended"

Finding the perfect subwoofer is not an easy quest. In fact, acquiring a sub that not only performs well, but also blends in seamlessly with your audio/video system as well as your décor, can be a laborious, agonizing process. The typical A/V consumer who purchases a 5.1 speaker system containing a subwoofer never really compares the sonic performance to any other manufacturer's product. Why is this? It's because there is an implication that the product that blends best is obviously manufactured as a complete system — right? Well, not necessarily.

Many factors contribute to the elusive synergy we all desire. There's the room and of course the set-up, yet nothing contributes as much to a subwoofer's sonic integration as its performance. However, there are several other factors to consider. What makes a subwoofer so special is its ability to move air. One philosophy for achieving this is to use a very large driver with a short throw, a design that can provide great accuracy if

"The SuperCube can really slam you ... tanks were as real as life … more importantly it has the quickness to blend with music"

perfectly implemented, but one that often comes in a very sizable package. Another philosophy is to use a smaller driver with an extended throw distance. The SuperCube is part of a growing trend towards smaller cubes with long-throw drivers. This configuration is space-conscious, and can provide the abundant air movement that movie and music lovers desire.

Technology

The SuperCube I is constructed from Medite, an ultra-rigid material similar to MDF that provides even greater strength and resistance to vibration. It incorporates a front-firing 10-inch long-throw driver, and two side-firing passive drivers that are also constructed from Medite. These side-firing passive drivers serve to allow the active driver the available volume to operate in a sealed enclosure, but additionally provide a great deal of bass themselves. Definitive Technology has chosen to use the Medite material in its passive drivers to provide overall control and additional rigidity to the enclosure.

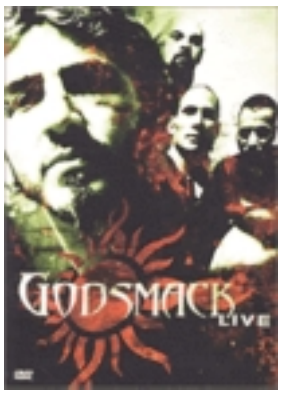
"The fact that it blended so well with my $20,000 Revel Salons is ample testimony for its accuracy."

This subwoofer has a very low frequency response of 1 4 Hz to 150 Hz. The SuperCube uses a very efficient 1,500-watt Class D amplifier, facilitating the power to move the driver piston very fast and recover quickly from long throws. For connections, it has low-level RCA inputs, as well as high-level speaker cable inputs, which allows you the ability to limit the low frequencies that your main loudspeakers experience, thus lightening the load to your receiver or amplifier if necessary. It also provides a LFE RCA input for connecting directly from your preamplifier or processor. The SuperCube is well outfitted when it comes to controls. It provides variable high-pass and low-pass crossovers, both fully adjustable from 40 to 150 Hz. A significant feature is the fully variable 180-degree phase alignment knob. This gives you the ability to dial in the phase and obtain the most seamless integration with the rest of your system, which in turn gives you the ability to ensure that information from the sub reaches you in phase with the main loudspeakers. Many subs provide a phase switch allowing zero, 90 or 180 degrees. This fully adjustable pot is an outstanding feature, one that allowed me to better integrate the SuperCube into my system. A fuse and a volume control knob round off the rear panel.

"driven by a mighty 1500-watt amplifier … the SuperCube undoubtedly provided all the necessary weight of a live performance"

Music and Movies

Very few speakers provide enough bass to truly emulate a live musical performance. Most speakers are not full-range, due to the huge cost and lack of efficiency involved. Even full-range speakers lack the air movement to accurately recreate the rock bottom lows that you hear at live events, from symphony performances to rock 'n' roll concerts.



Let's light it up a little with the ***Godsmack Live*** DVD (Universal). This DVD-V proved to be a great demonstration disc for subwoofers with its heavy driving beat and abundance of low frequency information. In the song "Awake," the SuperCube undoubtedly provided all the necessary weight of a live performance. I listened to this cut at extreme volumes and managed to integrate it with my Revel system remarkably well. Initially, I struggled with position and phase alignment. This is a something that

is required for all new subwoofer installations. At first, the sub information was directional and boomy. Through trial and error and a few hours of playing, I managed to dial the phase so that the SuperCube sounded integral to the rest of the speaker system. The song "Sick of Life" was powerful and had deep plentiful sub bass, yet I heard no undesirable fatness.

"The SuperCube is very small and looks great, making it a welcome addition to practically every home décor."

In a rock 'n' roll mood, I went for the heavy beats of System of a Down from their DVD-V ***Toxicity*** (Sony Music). I played the opening cut "Toxicity," a studio video performance, at extreme volumes. This performance is very high energy with enormous bass information. This is not a multi-channel release, so I played with a couple of DSP modes as well as two-channel. What I found was that the reproduced low frequencies were tight and extended, no matter what matrix I chose. If a subwoofer is not quick and accurate, extended sessions of sustained bass can saturate the room, turning your room into a rumbling mess of low frequency. The SuperCube maintained control and provided rock-solid bass support.

"The SuperCube I provides great flexibility with its infinitely variable phase control and high and low pass adjustment features."

Mellowing out a tad and stepping back a couple decades in its origin, I loaded Sammy Hagar & the Waboritas live DVD concert (Image Entertainment) and chose the song "Rock Candy," originally released on Montose's 1975 debut LP. The drum intro was physically moving. The SuperCube can really slam you. I remained very excited about this performance, even after repeating it a half dozen times during my evaluation. Set-up played a big role in the performance, yet there was no questioning the SuperCube's quickness and agile reproduction. What makes this even more impressive is that the SuperCube maintains its control even at the lowest frequencies, which at 14 Hz is amongst the lowest available at any reasonable price point. The fact that it blended so well with my $20,000 Revel Salons is ample testimony for its accuracy.

Yearning to feel the sonic and physical impact of a war film produced to virtual perfection, I went with ***Saving Private Ryan*** (DreamWorks). This Steven Spielberg classic, which earned him 1998's Best Director Oscar, is home to some bone-crushing low-frequency thrills. In the scene where the Americans attempt to save the coveted bridge, tanks were as real as life. This provided the best sub integration that I have heard in my system. Having spent three years of my life stationed in Europe in a peacetime combat battalion, the sound of squeaking tracks provided a chilling memory. The Definitive SuperCube made the tanks sound almost too real.

Let's play with some multi-channel music from Don Henley's ***The End of The Innocence*** release (DTS Entertainment). I listened to the tune "Give Me What You Got" and found the SuperCube to again provide a pleasing blend of power and nimbleness. The sub bass information was abundant, yet not overbearing or fat in any way. It's a subwoofer's ability to slam you like an undersized hockey forward, and then seductively draw you in, that makes a subwoofer good. The Definitive Technology SuperCube I did both very well. In the title track, "End of Innocence," there was no real need for abundance yet in a credit to the folks at DTS, the sub information was accurately placed and the SuperCube handled it well.

"This subwoofer has a very low frequency response of 14 Hz to 150 Hz … The SuperCube I simply made me excited about my music and movies."

The Downside

Is there a downside to a piece performing at the very top of its price class and the one above? The SuperCube I provides great flexibility with its infinitely variable

"ability to slam you like an undersized hockey forward, and then seductively draw you in"

phase control and high and low pass adjustment features. My concern, however, is that the owner's manual doesn't get the average consumer anywhere close to a perfectly optimized set-up. Even with my experience, this was a challenge. Since the ultimate performance of a product is assessed in your home and not at the manufacturer's lab, I think that additional set-up information is necessary. If you are purchasing this product either in a 5.1 system or separately, I recommend that you insist that your retailer come to your home to assure optimal set-up. If that doesn't work, the owner's manual generously invites you to call Definitive Technology direct where they can answer any questions that you may have. As a rule, if you cannot fool your ears into believing that your main loudspeakers are producing the bass, then your set-up needs work.

"performing at the very top of its price class and the one above"

Conclusion

It is safe to say that every audio/video system needs reinforcement from a subwoofer regardless of the low frequency rating of your main loudspeakers. Even if your speakers reproduce ultra-low frequencies, they are simply unable to move the masses of air equal to that of a sub. The Definitive Technology SuperCube I is the best subwoofer that I have auditioned in its class. Having reviewed the Sunfire Architectural Subwoofer, and having spent many hours with the Sunfire Signature Subwoofer, both incredible products that were reviewed very favorably in the Revolution, I simply felt that the SuperCube I performed at a higher level in my system. It blended superbly with my Revel Salons, a formidable task to say the least. The SuperCube is very small and looks great, making it a welcome addition to practically every home décor. It has ample connections and has the controls to integrate it very well with your 5.1 system. More importantly, it has the quickness to blend with music playback. This is not trivial in that most subs fail to combine an abundant amount of air movement with the swiftness and agility to reproduce your music accurately. This has never been more important than now, with the impending multi-channel formats in the visible future. At $1,200, this sub is a bargain. The SuperCube I simply made me excited about my music and movies.

Every year *audiorevolution.com* honors "The Best High-Performance Audio/Video Products You Can Buy." In 2002, the Category Winner for Subwoofers, Subwoofer-of-the-Year, was the Definitive Technology SuperCube I.

Associated Equipment

Amplification
- Sonic Frontiers Power 3 (SE)
- Proceed HPA 3
- Proceed HPA 2

Preamp
- Sonic Frontiers Line 3
- Sunfire Theater Grand II
- Conrad-Johnson Premier 17LS
- Anthem AVM20

Digital
- Linn Sondek CD-12
- Camelot Roundtable DVD Player
- Sonic Frontiers SFT-1 (I2S-E)
- Sonic Frontiers Processor 3
- Audio Research CD2
- Sony DVP S530D DVD
- Kenwood DV-5700

Video
- Sony VPH 1270Q
- Faroudja NR Series (800x600)
- Silicon Image DVDO I-Scan Pro
- Stewart Filmscreen Studiotek 130
- Stewart Filmscreen Greyhawk

Power
- Richard Gray's Power Company 400S (4 Units)
- PS Audio P600

Cables
- Transparent Reference Speaker Cable
- Transparent Audio Reference Balanced Interconnects
- Transparent Premium Component Video
- Transparent Premium RGB Video
- AudioQuest Dragons SE
- Kimber Select KS-1130
- Nirvana Digital

Movies & Music
- ***Godsmack* — *Live*** DVD
- **System of a Down — *Toxicity*** DVD
- **Sammy Hagar & the Waboriats — *Live*** DVD
- ***Saving Private Ryan***
- **Don Henley - *The End of the Innocence***

Additional
- Black Diamond Racing Cones

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